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SUBJECT: UNAMID'S REPORTED FAILURE TO MOVE 3000 CONTAINERS

¶1. (SBU) UNAMID has over 3000 containers in Port Sudan and El Obeid, Kordofan waiting for transportation to Nyala, Darfur, according to a UNAMID administrative officer. At least half of these are in El Obeid. According to the officer and to other sources in the NGO and diplomatic community in Khartoum, the delay in transporting the containers has absolutely nothing to do with GOS obstruction or a lack of security escorts. It is almost entirely due to UNAMID weak logistical capabilities. UNAMID procurement is simply incapable of cutting the necessary contracts with local transportation companies to move the containers. Internal financial controls and bureaucracy as well as slow payment mechanisms prevent UNAMID from cutting the necessary deals. The German Ambassador noted to CDA Fernandez on July 27 that "unlike WFP, UNAMID won't pay in cash, and pays late, they expect Sudanese truckers to have bank accounts." The UNAMID officer said there are plenty of trucks available; it's just that the local contractors won't work at the prices offered and given the late payments. The officer thought it unlikely that additional help from headquarters would improve the situation. What is required is a top-down decision to make this happen and find a way to "bend the system to local circumstances rather than making the local system bend to UN bureaucracy."

¶2. (SBU) Meanwhile, WFP is able to transport hundreds of trucks into Nyala each month. A WFP logistical officer observed that UNAMID should never have signed single contracts from Port Sudan all the way to Nyala. WFP splits it into two contracts because one group of transport companies have trucks that go from Port Sudan to El Obeid on paved roads, and another group of companies have smaller off-road capable trucks that go from El Obeid to Nyala. WFP agreed that UNAMID has problems with delayed payments as well (and probably should create a mechanism to be able to pay with cash up front,) but said there is also a lack of trucks that can transport 20 foot shipping containers. (WFP doesn't ship containers and is therefore able more flexible and able to use smaller trucks.) So either UNAMID must buy some trucks to move all these containers, or create a contract that will allow a local company to buy the necessary trucks. WFP also suggested that UNAMID should consider moving the containers via train, since there are trains that go from Port Sudan to Nyala and from El Obeid to Nyala. A final suggestion was for UNAMID to consider unpacking the containers and breaking the shipments into smaller sizes, though TCCs and UNAMID may not be willing to have their containers opened. "UNAMID needs some logisticians rather than procurement officers," noted the WFP officer.

¶3. (SBU) The WFP officer also noted that even if UNAMID can manage to move 300 containers a month (a rapid rate given the current capacity of roads and transport companies,) it will take a year to move the current back-log. UNAMID had requested assistance from WFP in moving their containers for them, but ultimately WFP decided it was too much of a mess and "too politically risky" to become involved.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: UNAMID has a very serious and embarrassing problem on its hands, one that it is not currently capable of solving. It is

much easier for DPKO to posture and hide behind the false image of a uniformly malevolent Sudanese regime obstructing the UN at every turn. Instead of seeking advice first on the best method to get the containers to Nyala, UNAMID signed contracts that local companies are not able to complete. The fact that UNMIS has a logistical hub in El Obeid made this a logical place to send containers when UNAMID was just getting started, but now it is stuck with 1500 containers in El Obeid that it cannot easily move. New contracts on transport by train seem possible, combined with repackaging of the contents of some containers (those that can feasibly be repackaged for smaller trucks) as well as finding a way to both improve the road to Nyala and increase the capacity of transport companies by signing new contracts to help them buy the necessary trucks. UNAMID won't be able to do this cheaply nor without pursuing creative solutions, something that the current UNAMID administrative and procurement apparatus seem incapable of doing. This is not to say the problem can be easily solved; we warn against berating UNAMID as this is a seriously complicated logistical issue that requires greater capacity and attention than UNAMID is currently capable of dedicating, but at the very least one would have thought they could have availed themselves of the hard-won experience won by other UN agencies such as WFP.

FERNANDEZ